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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography, developed as a part of a course in methodology for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), focuses on the pragmatic approach, which emphasizes development of language as communication through immersion in the target language and culture. The bibliography contains 44 citations of books, articles, and book chapters. Each citation consists of basic bibliographic information and a brief annotation. (MSE)

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The Pragmatic Approach to Language Teaching:
An Annotated Bibliography.

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Introduction

Our sources for the pragmatic method begin with John W. Oller who authored a pragmatic curriculum for beginning Spanish students in 1963. At this time the language teaching world was focusing on the audio-lingual method, transformational grammar, and the problem of the interference of the native language on the language to be learned.

Oller felt that the student should be immersed in the language. Through film sequences he presented the language in the context of the country with native speakers so that cultural items and idiosyncrasies could be introduced. He was not concerned with introducing grammatical forms in the order of their difficulty, but rather in using language that was natural to the native speakers in the situation. He believed it was important to present information in an interesting story form with a natural order of events divided into segments which could be used as separate lessons in teaching.

His main aim was to emphasize language as communication. Language must be studied and finally used in relationship to situations, peoples' feelings, previous happenings, etc. He calls this extralinguistic information.

John W. Oller, Jr. has continued his father's work. Most of the references we have listed are articles or books written by him or listed in his bibliographies. We have also included sources which support or compliment the main tenets of Oller's pragmatic method: immersion, storytelling, extralinguistic features, and the logical and sequential ordering of materials.

Note: When the notation [AW modified; AA] is used after an abstract Adamu Walelign has modified the author's abstract. [JF modified; AA] indicates Jeannette Frank has done the modification. [JF modified; A] indicates that Jeannette Frank has modified the author's introduction or summary statements.

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The Pragmatic Approach: An Annotated Bibliography

Bransford, J. D. & Johnson, M. K. (1972). Contextual prerequisites for understanding: Some investigations of comprehension and recall. Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 11 (6), 717-726.

This paper presents a series of studies which show that relevant contextual knowledge is a prerequisite for comprehending prose passages. In each study there was increased comprehension and recall when students were supplied with appropriate information before they heard test passages.

Burt, M. K. & Dulay, H. C. (1983). Optimal language learning environment. In J. W. Oller, Jr. & P. A. Richard-Amato (Eds.), Methods that work. Rowley, MA.: Newbury House.

The article states that language teachers should focus on the content of communication rather than on language form. It also asserts that the need to recreate a part or all of the target language environment for the learner is very critical. Films, film-strips, fun and games help to facilitate the pragmatic mapping of utterances onto meaningful contexts of experience.

Capretz, P. J. (1987). French in Action. New Haven: Yale University Press.

This immersion program seems similar in many ways to the Spanish program by John Oller. The program is based on a series of fifty-two half hour filmed episodes that take place in France. The theme is a tongue-in-check boy meets girl story. There is an emphasis on communicative fluency. The program does not introduce grammatical forms in order of simplest to more complicated, but instead uses tenses and expressions natural to the native speaker in the filmed situation.

Cohen, A. D., & Swain, M. (1976). Bilingual education: The immersion model in the North American context. TESOL Quarterly, 10, 45-53.

This article examines immersion techniques with the majority language group child. It lists seventeen characteristics of successful immersion programs in North America. These characteristics are often not present in immersion programs for minority language groups and could hopefully be used in improving these programs.

Come spin a yarn: The story-telling handbook. (1987).
New York: New York City Board of Education.

This is a handbook published as a guide for a story-telling contest held in the New York elementary schools to encourage reading. There are guides given to choosing a story, presenting the story and pitfalls to avoid.

Fugate, F. L. & Fugate, R. B. (1980). Secrets of the world's best-selling writer: The storytelling techniques of Erle Stanley Gardner. New York: William Morrow.

This book describes the techniques of one of the most successful fictionalists of all time. One recommendation he gives which Oller repeats is that the storyline should be maintained through stageable action.

Hauptman, P. C. (1971). A structural approach versus a situational approach to foreign-language teaching. Language Teaching, 21, 235-244.

These two approaches were compared using two groups of American children learning Japanese. The structural approach presented material based on grammatical, etc. difficulty. The situational approach did not take difficulty into account, but used meaningful dialogues. The latter produced equal or better results and was significantly more successful with students of high language aptitude and intelligence.

Kennedy, G. (1973). Conditions for language learning. In J. W. Oller, Jr. & J. C. Richards (Eds.), Focus on the learner, pp. 66-82.

The writer maintains that the learner's attitude to the

target language, and his/her desire to use it communicatively in novel situations are very critical. Efforts to enhance these must be made using attractive, varied and realistic materials on films, records, books, magazines and other audio-visual aids. Activities which make communicative demands on the learner and where the new language is indispensable contribute to successful language learning.

Krashen, Stephen D. (1981). Second language acquisition and second language learning. New York: Pergamon.

This book won an award for the best book on foreign language teaching published in 1981. It discusses the difference between "learning" and "acquisition" and gives much impressive evidence in favor of the input hypothesis and other ideas which it proposes.

Krashen, Stephen D. (1985). The input hypotheses: Issues and implications. New York: Longman.

Krashen discusses and reviews the evidence supporting his Input Hypothesis. Then he presents five possible arguments against the Input Hypothesis. Next he presents a four-stage practical model for language-teaching programs.

Lafford, B. A. (1987). Providing comprehensible input for advanced conversation classes in university settings. Italica, 64, 278-297.

Listening skills can be developed by exposing advanced students to a wide variety of television and radio programs of different genres, in addition to teacher-generated input. The importance of encouraging students to obtain exposure outside of class is underscored. It is also stated that discussions of listening/reading materials should arouse the student's intellectual curiosity. [AW modified; AA].

Morrow, K. (1987). Using texts in a communicative approach. ELT Journal, 41, 248-256.

The article suggests that three factors are central to the use of language materials: authenticity,

involvement and choice. Authenticity involves the sense of using materials taken from 'real life'. The response of the student as an individual human being is the essence of communication. The student should also be offered a range of texts to choose from. [AW modified; AA].

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1969). Discrete-point tests versus tests of integrative skills. In John W. Oller, Jr. & Jack C. Richards (Eds.), Focus on the learner (pp. 184-199).

Repeated studies show that tests of integrative skills such as reading comprehension, cloze tests, dictation and composition tend to correlate better with teacher judgments and better with other measures of language skills than do any of the discrete-point tests such as using contrastive analysis or multiple choice because they more nearly reflect what people actually do when they use language. [JF modified; A]

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1971). Coding information in natural languages. The Hague: Mouton.

This monograph argues that language must be dealt with in its communicative function in order to account for its structure and use. This work is an attempt to justify and outline an approach to the study of language as an instrument for coding cognitive information.

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1971). Dictation as a device for testing foreign-language proficiency. English Language Teaching, 25 3, 254-259.

This paper supports the use of dictation in language testing. When a student is writing from dictation he must discriminate phonological units, make decisions about word boundaries, and translate this analysis into meaning. Oller also encourages the teacher to experiment with different kinds of language testing.

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1971). Language use and foreign language learning. International Review of Applied Linguistics, 9, 161-168.

This article rejects the notion of viewing language as being self-contained and independent of communicative value. It suggests that the most important principles to consider in program construction are pragmatic ones; involving a sequence of lessons connected by the extralinguistic information they contain rather than by the syntactic principles they are supposed to illustrate. [AW modified; AA].

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1972). Contrastive analysis, difficulty and predictability. Foreign Language Annals, 6, 95-106.

The article states that the language teacher does not need to know how a target structure contrasts with a native structure as much as s/he needs to know how speakers of the target language use the structure at issue. It claims that learning is accelerated by an increasing organization of the materials to be learned and by increased predictability. [AW modified; AA].

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1972). Transfer and interference as special cases of induction and substitution. Linguistics, 89, 25-33.

A theory that language is pragmatic in nature, and that the use of language is governed by probabilistic rules is proposed. Experimental data from first and foreign language teaching are explored briefly, and it is concluded that contextual differentiation of similar structures is necessary to maximize transfer and minimize interference. [AW modified; AA].

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1973). Some psycholinguistic controversies. In J. W. Oller, Jr. & J. C. Richards (Eds.), Focus on the learner (pp. 36-52). Rowley: Newbury House.

This paper discusses the error that Oller sees in the transformational grammar theory which concentrates on linguistic units and not on what information is being coded. He feels that any language theory must include the presupposition that language coding involves both complex linguistic form and complex sets of extralinguistic information.

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Oller, J. W., Jr. (1974). Expectancy for successive elements: Key ingredients to language use. Foreign Language Annals, 7, 443-452.

The article views language as a system of processing information through sequential coding. The key element in language use is the ability to anticipate elements in sequence. It defines language teaching as providing linguistic data in communicative settings and stresses the need for encouraging learners to take advantage of acquired expectations about situations and events in the real world.

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1975). Cloze, discourse, and approximations to English. In Burt, Marina K. & Heidi C. Dulay (Eds.), On TESOL '75: New directions in second language learning, teaching and bilingual education, 345-355. Washington, D. C.: TESOL.

Oller gives the details of an experiment to substantiate the hypothesis that "grammar based expectancies ranging over all levels of discourse help the language user to infer the plausible limits of intended meanings and enable the user to supply reasonable guesses about missing, distorted or erroneous material in a stream of speech or a written passage".

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1979). Language tests at school: A pragmatic approach. New York: Longman.

After his introduction on what a language test is and what language testing is about Oller divides his book into Part One, concerning the theory and research bases for pragmatic language testing, Part Two discussing the theories and methods of discrete point testing, and Part Three on practical recommendations for language testing.

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1983). Some working ideas for language teaching. In J. W. Oller, Jr., & P. A. Richard-Amato (Eds.), Methods that work (pp. 3-19). Rowley: Newbury House.

This chapter considers four working ideas: Krashen's

input hypothesis, the textuality hypothesis, the expectancy hypothesis and the episode hypothesis. It also gives six recommendations for language teaching: use motivated text with significant conflicts, seek stageable action, respect the logic of experience, first establish the facts, break the text down into manageable chunks, and make multiple passes through the text. [JF modified; AA]

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1983). Story writing principles and ESL teaching. TESOL Quarterly, 17, 39-53.

Oller proposes that story-telling techniques may be helpful in making ESL/EFL materials meaningful, comprehensible, recallable, and in a word, learnable. The textuality hypothesis, the expectancy hypothesis, Krashen's input hypothesis and the episode hypothesis are discussed. [JF modified; AA]

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1984). A preview of Methods that work. [Review of Methods that work]. In P. Larson, E.L. Judd, & D. Messerschmitt (Eds.), On TESOL '84: A brave new world for TESOL. Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

This book review is mainly devoted to explaining the main features of pragmatics and the rules of pragmatic mapping. It states, that in all of the methods that work, the main objective is to establish the pragmatic linkage between texts and facts in the target language. It stresses the need for episodically organized and logically structured texts.

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1987). Interview with John W. Oller, Jr. on pragmatics. PASAA, 17 (1), 1-14.

In this interview Oller gives a detailed exposition of pragmatics, and emphasizes the link between text and experience. The need for presenting interesting and episodically structured stories is also pointed out. Pragmatic learning activities and testing are outlined. The links of pragmatics to other methods, and its relevance to Thai learners of English are discussed.

Oller, J. W., Jr. (1987). Practical ideas for language teachers from a quarter century of

language testing. English Teaching Forum, 27(4), 42-46.

Oller recommends that language testing should be an integral part of the instructional process. Teaching/testing activities based on the underlying facts of a story or narrative could include yes or no questions; reading; dictation; both oral and written question and answer exercises; dramatization, narration, improvisation, essay writing, etc.

Oller, J. W., Jr., Hudson, A. J. & Liu, P. F. (1977). Attitudes and attained proficiency in ESL: A sociolinguistic study of native speakers of Chinese in the United States. Language Learning, 27, 1-27.

The article reports that attitudes towards self and native-language group, as well as toward the target language group, were found to be positively correlated with attained proficiency in ESL. However, the relation between reasons for studying ESL or travelling to the US and attained proficiency were contrary to previous predictions. [AW modified; AA].

Oller, J. W., Jr. & Obrecht, D. H. (1968). Pattern drill and communicative activity: A psycholinguistic experiment. International Review of Applied Linguistics, 6, 65-74.

This study compares two groups of beginning Spanish students and the use of the pattern drill in learning. The results of the study support the hypothesis that the effectiveness of a given pattern drill is significantly increased by relating the language of that drill to communicative activity in the teaching/learning process. (JF modified; AA)

Oller, J. W., Jr. & Obrecht, D. H. (1969). The principle of informational sequence. International Review of Applied Linguistics, 7, 117-123.

This article reports the results of an experiment designed to test the hypothesis that informational sequencing is a useful device which significantly

enhances the learning of sentences in a foreign language. It concludes that informational sequence does enhance the learning of even a very small sample of foreign language material. [AW modified; AA].

Oller, J. W., & Oller, J. W., Jr. (1983). An integrated pragmatic curriculum: A Spanish program. In John W. Oller, Jr., and Patricia A. Richard-Amato (Eds.), Methods that work, (pp. 20-37). Rowley: Newbury House.

An outline with examples is given of a pragmatic curriculum in Spanish published in 1963 by Encyclopedia Britannica Films. The program included a film which followed a Spanish family and their activities. John Oller, Sr. its author called it an immersion program. Many quotes are included from the teacher's manual.

Oller, J. W., Jr. & Sales, B. D. (1969). Conceptual restrictions on English: A psycholinguistic study. Lingua, 23, 209-232.

The article states that if the communicative function of language is taken to be the primary source of information for the language learner, then the more that is known about this function, the more readily one can make generalizations and associations necessary to learn a language. It also states that discussion of the semantic basis of syntax helps to understand problems concerning language acquisition and use.

Oller, J. W., Jr, Sales, B. D. & Harrington, R. V. (1969). A basic circularity in traditional and current linguistic theory. Lingua, 22 317-388.

The article asserts that the study of language can be enhanced by focusing on the problems of language communication and studying the physical manifestation of both utterances and their referents in sociocultural settings. It also states that an analysis of the relationships existing between linguistic units and the perceptual and conceptual entities of the cognitive experience which people talk about is required.

Peck, Robert Newton. (1980). Secrets of successful fiction. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest.

Robert Peck's book gives guidelines on writing good fiction. Some points that he makes: don't make general statements, make a word picture; give a description energy; a story needs some sort of clash or conflict for interest. Oller feels teachers need to know how to judge good fiction in order to decide on effective teaching materials.

Poulson, D. (1979). Children's comprehension and memory for stories. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 28, 379-403.

In this study sixteen 4-year old and sixteen 6-year old children were shown four picture stories, some in normal order and some in scrambled order. The conclusion drawn was that the best remembered details were the ones in story order; the others tended to be forgotten.

Richard-Amato, P. A. (1989). Making it happen: Interaction in the second language classroom. White Plains, NY: Longman.

This is a comprehensive and practical methodology book that synthesizes theory and classroom practice in ESL. It establishes a solid theoretical base for meaningful interaction as the focus of the classroom, in addition to providing numerous methods and activities, and raising practical issues concerning classroom management. Oller's article in Part 4 deals with the pragmatic approach, the episode hypothesis and gives guidelines for materials selection. [Taken from 1990 Catalog: Longman ESL, p. 51].

Richards, J. C. (1980). Conversation: What it is and what it isn't. TESOL Quarterly, 14, 411-431.

Richards asserts that conversation skills are complex and subtle. The study of conversation can yield useful knowledge for the language teacher. Richards outlines some of the characteristics of conversation and explores the implications of conversational analysis for second language teaching.

Schallert, D. L. (1976). Improving memory for prose:

The relationship between depth of processing and context. Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 15 (1), 621-632.

The study showed that depth of comprehension as manipulated by task instructions and by different presentation durations effectively controlled the amount of information remembered from ambiguous prose passages. More accurate information was remembered under the more semantic instructions. (JF modified; A)

Schank, Roger C. (1975). The structure of episodes in memory. In D. G. Bobrow, & A. Collins (Eds.), Representation and understanding, 237-272. New York: Academic Press.

Schank says information is organized within episodic sequences and these episodic sequences serve to organize understanding. Human understanding is a process by which new information gets treated in terms of the old information already present in the memory.

Splosky, B. (1985). The limits of authenticity in language testing. Language Testing, 2, 31-40.

The writer believes that setting authenticity as a criterion raises important pragmatic and ethical questions in language testing: Lack of authenticity in a material or method weakens the generalizability of results. Any language test by its nature is stated to be inauthentic and abnormal language behavior, since the task is not to give, but to display knowledge. Only part of this difficulty can be overcome by authentic-seeming tasks. [AW modified; AA].

Stern, H. H. (1971). Psycholinguistics and second language teaching. In John W. Oller, Jr., and Jack C. Richards (Eds.), Focus on the learner (pp. 16-28).

Stern mentions three basic ideas in psycholinguistics: language is complex, language is not gibberish: it is always ordered, and language in use is always language in a meaningful context. Three themes of psycholinguistics: (1) language acquisition, (2) language use and (3) the intricate relationship

between language and meaning, between language and thought and emotion, between language and culture.

Ves Jeremias, J. M. (1982). The social component of the English classroom: Semantic and pragmatic considerations. Anglo American Studies, 2(1), 63-75.

According to this article, competence in a foreign language is as much a matter of 'social' learning as of 'linguistic' learning. Material embedded in interesting activities is memorable, and learning is facilitated if total security is removed and activity is unpredictable. Games provide an experience of the unpredictable; helping students to deal with the task of using English in 'unprepared', real situations. [AW modified; AA].

Wajnryb, R. (1986). Story-telling and language learning. Babel, 21(2), 17-24.

Story-telling in language learning can be adapted to any level and should be a regular event: Its purpose is always genuinely communicative; it is linguistically honest; it comes naturally to most people; it is sensual; it caters to the individual while forging a community in the classroom with reduced anxiety. [AW modified; AA].

Widdowson, H. G. (1979). Directions in the teaching of discourse. In C. K. Brumfit & K. Johnson (Eds.), The communicative approach to language teaching, 49-60. Oxford: University Press.

While linguists are still discussing the communicative properties of language, the language teacher must take discourse into account in her teaching. Language cannot be studied as detached sentences and linguistic structures. Teachers must select and grade classroom material in terms of communicative acts.